

FINE ARTS PROGRAMS IN COLLEGES BILL

JULY 1, 1952.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BARDEN, from the Committee on Education and Labor, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 7494]

The Committee on Education and Labor, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 7494) to authorize the Commissioner of Education to encourage the further development and growth of educational fine arts programs in State and land-grant and other accredited nonprofit colleges and universities and in other nonprofit organizations, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with amendments and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendments are as follows:

(a) Page 1, line 7, beginning with the language "to make provisions for", strike through line 4, on page 2, and insert in lieu thereof:

to assist in making arrangements for the public presentation in Washington, D. C., of fine arts productions of such colleges and universities and nonprofit organizations.

(b) Page 2, beginning on line 23, strike out all of section 3.

(c) Page 3, line 10, strike out the numeral "4" and insert in lieu thereof "3".

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of this bill is to encourage the further development and growth of the educational fine arts programs in State and land-grant and other accredited colleges and universities and other nonprofit organizations by authorizing the Commissioner of Education to assist them in making arrangements for presenting fine arts productions in Washington, D. C. Such colleges and universities and nonprofit organizations have found it practically impossible up to the present time to obtain the use of Federal and District of Columbia government buildings in which to make these presentations. The greatest difficulty has arisen because there has been no one person in Washington authorized to arrange for the use of these buildings and carry out

the simple but detailed work of making the necessary contacts with the various agencies of the Federal Government and the government of the District of Columbia in order to arrange for a definite time and place to make the presentations. This bill places that authority with the Commissioner of Education who will receive the applications from these various institutions and organizations and assist in procuring a suitable building or buildings for the presentation of these programs from the standpoint of proper selection and scheduling.

The buildings will be made available without charge to any such college, university, or nonprofit organization for the presentation of fine arts productions. However, in providing suitable space for these presentations neither the Federal Government nor the government of the District of Columbia shall incur any expenses or assume any financial responsibility except those incidental to the furnishing of heat, light, and custodial services necessary in connection with these productions.

The fact that this bill facilitates the production of fine arts presentations in the Nation's Capital will undoubtedly have far-reaching effects throughout the country on the fine arts programs of our colleges and universities because it will create an incentive for teachers and students.

It was pointedly brought out in the Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education in December 1947 that American colleges and universities need encouragement and incentive to develop their fine arts programs which are generally recognized as necessary for a full and well-rounded education. The following very significant quotation comes from volume 1 of the report of that Commission:

One of the tasks of American democracy is to heighten and diffuse esthetic sensibility and good taste, to make our people sensitive to beauty in all its varied forms: in the commodities and services of everyday life, in private and public buildings, in community and regional planning.

The study of the arts in general education should not be directed toward the development of creative artists of exceptional gifts, though it may in some instances lead to this. It should aim at appreciation of the arts as forms of human expression, at awakening or intensifying the student's sensitivity to beauty and his desire to create beauty in his every day surroundings, at developing bases for discrimination and interpretation, at inducing sympathy with arts and artists and active concern for their welfare. Support of the arts can no longer be left to the patronage of wealth; active encouragement of artistic expression in its various forms must become the responsibility of all citizens.

There seems to be no doubt to this committee that there is a great need in this country for the fresh voices of the young non-New York, non-Hollywood people to be heard. But, for them to be heard, they must be encouraged. There is a need for these young people to feel that the Nation wants to hear about that far greater America of their native States and regions, to hear about the legends of their past and the hopes they have for the future. With the encouragement this bill gives the youth from all over the country to be seen and heard in the Nation's Capital there may be uncovered creative talents of which our country might well be proud, and which may contribute to a better understanding of our Nation throughout the world.

For the Federal Government to provide the space in public buildings in which these presentations can be shown is little in comparison to the potential benefits that will undoubtedly accrue to our educational institutions and to the development of the fine arts that reflect the true America.

That there has been far too little consideration of the drama programs of our colleges and universities has been pointed out by Dr. Francis H. Horn, executive secretary of the department of higher education of the National Education Association in an article entitled "An Educator Looks at the Drama." The following is a pertinent excerpt from that article:

It should now be said that the future of the theater in America rests at this time squarely upon its shoulders. The further development of the community theater will in time exert much influence on the whole national theater, especially in the creation of an audience; but until the community theater shares more extensively in the systematic study of the drama and in the training of people for work in the theater, the colleges and universities will have the major task of saving the theater. That the professional theater in America needs saving is evident from a few statistics.

In 1900, there were over 5,000 legitimate professional theaters in the United States—not counting music halls and opera houses. In 1946, there were only 200, one-sixth of them in New York's Times Square district. Fifty years ago, many of these theaters were producing new plays as well as classic plays in repertory. But today we have only the Broadway theater, and its decline is evident even to New York playgoers. In 1927-28, there were 302 Broadway productions, 205 of them new plays, compared to 56 productions in 1949-50, with 18 new plays. The Broadway theater, though probably the best in the world technically, and possibly even from the standpoint of acting, has come to such a pass that it has been described as "a vast theatrical lunatic asylum." There is no need to consider the reasons for the present situation. It is necessary to point out, however, that though some efforts at reform have been initiated, salvation of the theater in America does not lie within the Broadway theater. The present Broadway theater is unable to reproduce itself; much of its new blood must come from the college and university theaters.

But their major contribution to the theater is not the young actors and writers and designers that they send to Broadway. It is in their development of a grass-roots movement, which, with the help of the community theater, and with the shot in the arm which ANTA now seems able to give, holds some promise of reestablishing a living theater of real vitality.

A survey of the college and university theater in 1948-49 that produced only 126 replies, from small as well as large institutions, indicated that there had been 1,446 performances of 403 plays, employing casts or crews in excess of 20,000, and playing before audiences of 1,200,000. This is a considerable amount of dramatic activity. The total in all institutions would be very great, indeed. But the college theaters are failing to rise to their great opportunities. They are following the Broadway lead too lavishly, they are presenting too few original plays, and they are doing too little experimental work. But these theaters are laying the foundations for a truly national theater, returned to the people. Through their professional training, they are contributing to the maintenance of a high quality theater in New York, they are preparing the increasing numbers of teachers of drama and the theater for the schools and colleges, and they are providing the devoted and energetic spirits who are developing and staffing the growing numbers of community theaters throughout the country. But their responsibility for the theater in America goes much beyond such professional training. Their major responsibility, which is shared with the schools, is the development of an adult population that is familiar with the magnificent cultural heritage in our drama, that has developed a sound critical judgment and discriminating appreciation of the drama, that has become accustomed to playing-going, and, finally, that will demand and support a living theater of high caliber.

The theater is a potent educational and cultural force, but in America it is denied to the vast majority of our people. Drama, the harmonizer of the arts and perhaps the greatest of the arts, has been shamefully neglected. It is time that we recognized its importance to all the people and created the conditions in which a great national theater can flourish. In this challenging task, a major responsibility rests with the schools and colleges.

Perhaps more than any other city in the country the population of Washington, D. C., is made up of people from every State in the Union, most of whom retain an interest in the State or region from whence they came. The opportunity for them to see productions of the fine arts from the various colleges and universities of their home States

will be enthusiastically welcomed and will, in turn, provide an incentive to the teachers and students to develop to an even greater degree their skills in these arts. In this respect Melvin D. Hildreth, executive vice chairman of the National Capitol Sesquicentennial Commission, aptly testified before the subcommittee of the Education and Labor Committee as follows:

There is a tremendous amount of interest in the people of the Capital of the United States in these cultural developments not only because of the interest of the people themselves, but because of our enormous transient population. This has become a shrine for the people of the United States and I think one of the most inspiring experiences that any of us can have is to follow a family group through the Smithsonian or through Mount Vernon and note how seriously they approach these shrines.

You gentlemen can do the same thing by following a crowd through the corridors of the Capitol and note these people who come here come as the result of years of planning and it is a lifetime experience.

If we could have this national theater where these groups could come from the land-grant colleges of the United States, it would bring into these colleges not only the element of achievement in competition, but what I believe is more important, and that is the development of our native writing talent which is fundamental if the theater is to survive.

To the city of Washington are brought the economic, political, and social problems of the Nation to be discussed, debated, and considered. It seems to the committee quite proper and fitting that in this same city should be displayed the skills and talents of our youth from every region in the field of fine arts.

A committee amendment was added to the bill striking language which would have authorized the Commissioner of Education to make provision for bringing to Washington and to other communities in the United States fine arts productions of colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations. The committee felt that this bill should be limited in scope to providing facilities in the District of Columbia and that it should be made clear that the Commissioner of Education did not have authority to arrange for transportation or to engage in other activities concerning the actual bringing of these groups to Washington. The committee substituted language which authorized the Commissioner of Education to assist in making arrangements for the public presentation in Washington of these fine arts productions. The committee believed that by this change in language the Commissioner of Education would have ample authority to do everything necessary to aid these groups in locating available space in the city.

A second amendment struck section 3 from the introduced bill. This section would have authorized the Commissioner of Education to receive contributions of money, materials, and other property from any source to aid in the development of the programs authorized by the act. The committee felt that such activity on the part of the Commissioner of Education was unnecessary and that such an authorization would be burdensome in the carrying out of his regular duties. Such activities can be carried out just as adequately by private groups without involving the Federal Government.

RAMSEYER RULE

The provisions of H. R. 7494 do not specifically amend any particular provision of existing law; therefore, it is not necessary to comply with the requirements of clause 2a of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

